FEEDING OF POOR CHILDREN ATTENDING SCHOOLS

86. Mr. C. R. Iyyunni *(Trichur-South)*: Will Government be pleased to state.—

(*a*) whether a Circular has been issued by the Education Department asking the various Educational Institutions of the State to feed the poor children attending schools during the interval;

(*b*) if so, when;

(*c*) whether the schools complied with the order; if so, how many;

(*d*) is the order contained in the Circular still in force?

Rao Sahib I. N. Menon *(Director of Public Instruction)*:

(*a*) No general Circular was issued; but an order was issued directing certain schools to commence noon-day feeding under certain conditions.

(*b*) 26th January 1942/13th Makaram 1117.

(*c*) Yes; 423.

(*d*) No.

Rao Sahib I. N. Menon *(Director of Public Instruction)*: I may be permitted to answer questions 86 and 87 together, because both relate to the same subject.

Mr. President: Yes.

Mr. A. Eachara Menon *(Chittur-Rural)*: Sub-division (*d*) of question No. 86 is "is the order contained in the Circular still in force" and the answer is "No". What is that order?

Rao Sahib I. N. Menon *(Director of Public Instruction)*: Sir, may I read the proceedings?

Mr. President: Yes.

Rao Sahib I. N. Menon *(Director of Public Instruction)*: "Proceedings of the Director of Public Instruction.

Subject.—Noon-day meals—poor and necessitous pupils—supply of.

Read correspondence ending with the Government Proceedings R. Dis. 20942/16, dated 22nd January 1942.

The rate for supplying noon-day meals to poor and necessitous children per head per working day is fixed at one anna or Rs. 11 per pupil per year. According to this basis, the local contribution per pupil per year should be Rs. 5—8—0, Government contributing an equal amount.

2. The feeding of poor and necessitous children at noon should be begun from 20th Makaram 1117, till the closing of the schools for the mid-summer vacation. Such of the schools as are not able to commence noon-day feeding from 20th Makaram 1117, due to delay in making arrangements, should begin it at as early a date as possible after 20th Makaram 1117.

3. Extract of this office letter dated 23rd December 1941, to Government, wherein is embodied the scheme in the matter of supplying noon-day meals to necessitous pupils, is communicated to the inspecting officers for circulation to the schools, which will be able to realise local contributions, for their information and guidance.

4. The attention of the heads of schools should be particularly drawn to rule (*j*) in the scheme. However small the contributions may be, noon-day feeding should be given to one or more pupils as the case may be, the expenditure being limited to the amount available, *i.e.*, local contribution plus equal Government contribution. The idea is that local contributions of even half an anna should be utilised.

5. The heads of schools are requested to address the President or Chairman of the local Panchayat, Town Council or Municipal Council for the nomination of an officer in the Committee for the conduct of noon-day feeding.

6. The Inspecting officers and their deputies will be given the amounts necessary for meeting the expenditure of Government contribution. The amounts should be drawn in contingent bills, the bills being sent to this office for counter-signature. The Inspecting officers are requested to report the amounts that have to be placed at their disposal and at the disposal of their deputies for the rest of this educational year.

7. Printed receipt books will be supplied to the Inspecting officers for distribution among the schools on receipt from the Press. In the mean-time collections may be made."

Mr. A. Eachara Menon *(Chittur Rural)*: Why is this circular not in force?

Rao Sahib I. N. Menon *(Director of Public Instruction)*: Sir, The incidents that followed the issue of this circular require some elucidation, because I see that there has been and there still is some room for misunderstanding.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

I raised the question whether it is not necessary in view of the present economic distress to give some assistance to the poor children especially to those who have to walk a long distance to take their mid-day meals. Government readily fell in with this proposal and set apart a sum of Rs. 5,000 as an experimental measure for the first year. I was not quite sure whether this amount would even touch the fringe of the problem. But as it was intended only as an experiment I thought I will gratefully accept it. Consequently I circularised my inspecting officers with a view to let me have a list of schools where noonday meals were in existence and the schools which are in a position to collect local contributions from philanthropic people to assist the Government in the matter. I thought this action was essential because the amount placed at my disposal was limited and a contribution was an antecedent condition of the grant. I thought it very essential to find out in advance the number of institutions and pupils who could be benefitted by this measure. After some correspondence and delay I got a list, I think of about 22 or 23 schools which were in a position to collect local contributions. The Inspecting Officers intimated to me that the others were not in a position to collect any local contribution in view of the very serious economic distress, that was prevalent and particularly in view of the disastrous conditions created by the recent cyclone. I tried to work out the actual details and found that the amount of grant sanctioned by the Government together with the local contributions promised by the several institutions would be sufficient to meet the expenditure of these 22 institutions. I then drafted a set of rules and placed them before the Government for approval. These rules related to the creation of local committee composed of non-officials, the only official, or quasi-official being the Headmaster of the local school concerned. The rules were approved and I issued the final order. What unfortunately happened was the whole correspondence show that they related only to schools which had promised this contribution. In fact the other had said that they could not raise this contribution and our calculations were based entirely on the statistics furnished by the Inspecting Officers prior to the implementing of the scheme. Unfortunately the Inspecting Officers communicated this order to every school in the State and afterwards the amount was sufficient for the rest of the year. What happened was when the schools found that it would be in their own interests to collect contributions somehow or other they seem to have strained every nerve and collected some fund out of local philanthropists. Anyhow by mistake it was communicated to all and sundry and the result has been that out of 600 schools about 400 and odd schools started noonday feeding. I had no information about it because I had relied entirely upon the circular which I had issued and the previous correspondence which led to it. But I happened to go to a school where noonday feeding was being done and I asked the person in charge whether he had any instructions to do so as I knew definitely that it was not one of the schools which had volunteered to do so. Then he showed me the circular. I asked the Inspecting Officers to report the number of schools in that category and found that if the scheme had to be applied to everyone of them the amount of money required would be colossal. So certainly I had to call a halt and instead of continuing the feeding for 90 days it had to be restricted to a month and a half. Even then I found that the sum of Rs. 5,000 granted would not be sufficient. I wanted to collect statistics to find out as to what precisely would be the commitments of the Government if all these claims proper and improper had to be liquidated purely out of moral considerations, because while the Government are not legally bound to give the money the fact remains that quite a large number of poor children were fed. The fault lay not on the Managers or Headmasters but on the Inspecting Officers who communicated the order to every institution while it was meant only for a few. I have been collecting statistics. In the meantime the time for the preparation of the estimates for 1118 came and so I provided for only Rs. 10,000. I know from experience that not Rs. 10,000 but even a lakh would not be sufficient to touch even the fringe of the problem. So that the experiment while it might have helped the Government to give some statistics with regard to the extent of the expenditure also demonstrated the impossibility of undertaking a scheme of such colossal magnitude. Now the statistics are being collected and I am unable to say definitely what precisely would be the amount required over and above the Rs. 5,000. The money has been provided and I think it will be possible at least to meet these claims. This is a long story and I am sorry that I have taken much of the time of the House.

Mr. E. Ikkanda Warriar *(Cheruthuruthi)*: What is the amount actually spent last year?

Rao Sahib I. N. Menon *(Director of Public Instruction)*: We have Rs. 5,000. According to the estimate which I have prepared on the statistics furnished by the Inspecting Officers it will come to about Rs. 4,650.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

Mr. E. Ikkanda Warriar *(Cheruthuruthi)*: Does the Government find that there is sufficient response from the public to contribute the half-share?

Rao Sahib I. N. Menon *(Director of Public Instruction)*: If you are going to be very nice and scrupulous and considering the nature of the country we live in, it is very difficult to say one way or the other. In many cases I find contributions were given not in money but in kind. For purposes of account it is very difficult to value them, for instance we cannot say what the price of a jack fruit will be. Anyhow there is no doubt that should it become possible for the Government to make another overture, there will be plenty of response from the local public.

Mr. E. Ikkanda Warriar *(Cheruthuruthi)*: If the response is encouraging, what prevents the Government from making this order universal?

Rao Sahib I. N. Menon *(Director of Public Instruction)*: I have made a rough estimate and I find it will come to a lakh of rupees for the Government.

Mrs. Thankamma N. Menon *(Ernakulam-Women)*: Is the Hon'ble Member for Education aware that the Ladies Association at Ernakulam is doing this work for the last two years?

Rao Sahib I. N. Menon *(Director of Public Instruction)*: The Hon'ble Lady member herself made this statement.

Mr. E. Ikkanda Warriar *(Cheruthuruthi)*: May I have a rough idea of the percentage of the student population who will be coming forward to claim this privilege?

Rao Sahib I. N. Menon *(Director of Public Instruction)*: It is very difficult to say because actually I find there are some people who have got a sense of false pride. They think that it is below their dignity to take advantage of this feeding. But the number will be fairly large in primary schools where we have the veriest poor. Before Government can undertake such a stupendous responsibility they must satisfy themselves that they have the where-with-all to undertake it.

Mr. C. R. Iyyunni *(Trichur-South)*: May I know whether any explanation has been called for from the Inspectors who are responsible for this thing?

Rao Sahib I. N. Menon *(Director of Public Instruction)*: They have been asked for an explanation and they have given me one. The Circular which I read is very clear. But unfortunately in giving the caption, I have not quoted the series of letters that passed between me and the Inspecting officers. I simply said "Read correspondence ending with Government Proceedings dated such and such". They thought that this Government Proceedings might be an enlarged one.

Mr. E. Ikkanda Warriar *(Cheruthuruthi)*: They took it in the proper spirit.

Rao Sahib I. N. Menon *(Director of Public Instruction)*: They had the definite guarantee that everyone will not resort to it because only a few had said that they could find the contribution required.

Mr. E. Ikkanda Warriar *(Cheruthuruthi)*: I hope the Government are not going to punish them.

Mr. C. R. Iyyunni *(Trichur-South)*: That is not my point. What I want to know is whether it was possible for the Inspector or the person who really received this communication to understand it in the manner in which it has been understood by the Director of Public Instruction.

Rao Sahib I. N. Menon *(Director of Public Instruction)*: Sir, I have read out the whole circular. As far as the contents of the circular go, it could not have been construed in that fashion; but I must say that I might have made it more clear if I had quoted the series of letters that passed between us. I tried my best to find out whether there was any negligence or carelessness on the part of the Inspecting officers, but I am convinced that it was on account of a *bona fide* mistake.

Mr. C. R. Iyyunni *(Trichur-South)*: May I know when the money will be paid to the various institutions which have done this work.

Rao Sahib I. N. Menon *(Director of Public Instruction)*: The Rs. 5,000 is being disbursed.

Mr. V. J. Mathai *(Planters)*: Cannot we possibly start with the first class first and then go on with the rest.

Rao Sahib I. N. Menon *(Director of Public Instruction)*: The difficulty would be this. Suppose you find two brothers one in Class III and the other in Class I. It is very difficult to draw a line and say the younger one may get it and the elder must go without. It is beset with very many human difficulties.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

87. Mr. C. V. Iyyu *(Kunnamkulam):* Will Government be pleased to state.—

(*a*) whether Government or the Director of Public Instruction has issued a circular to all or some schools in the State that Government will give aid at the rate of one anna per boy provided one anna is raised by the local people or school management for feeding the poor boys at noon time;

(*b*) the number of educational institutions, both Sirkar and Aided, in which such sort of poor feeding actually took place and the number of boys and girls fed in each institution during the last school year;

(*c*) whether Government has paid to the persons who conducted the poor feeding as promised in the circular?

Rao Sahib I. N. Menon *(Director of Public Instruction):* (*a*) No; but an order was issued by the Director to certain schools to the effect that Government contribution towards noonday feeding of poor and necessitous children will be at the rate of six pies per pupil per day, provided an equal amount has been collected as local contribution.

(*b*) 423. Full statistics are not available as regards the number of boys and girls fed in each institution.

(*c*) Not yet.

FLOOD PROBLEM—CHOONDAL VILLAGE

88. Mr. C. V. Iyyu *(Kunnamkulam):* Will Government be pleased to state.—

(*a*) whether they have not accepted a 3 year plan to combat the flood problem of Choondal village;

(*b*) will they be pleased to inform (*i*) the works turned out by the Government in the year 1117 (*ii*) the works expected to be done in 1118?

Mr. V. K. Aravindaksha Menon *(Chief Engineer):*

(*a*) There has not been a three year plan, but certain works have been proposed for execution in order to alleviate the problem of flood in the locality.—

They come under two headings.—

1. Improvements to canals and
2. Improvements to road-bridges.

(*b*) The improvement to the Choondal canal has been taken up this year and is expected to be completed also this year. The sill of one of the bridges has been lowered. The widening of certain other culverts on the Kunnamkulam road recommended by the Irrigation Board costing about Rs. 25,000 has not been taken up as it was thought desirable to watch the effect of the improvements of the canal, the lowering of the sill of one of the bridges and the widening of the main Keecheri bridge carried out this year.

PLANTATION DURING THE LAST TEN YEARS—PARTICULARS REGARDING

89. Mr. C. V. Iyyu *(Kunnamkulam):* Will Government be pleased to state.—

(*a*) the acreage of areas replanted by the Forest Department within the last 10 years and the different varieties of trees planted in the different taluks in the State;

(*b*) the total number of trees now existing in the new plantations (approximate number only needed)?

Mr. T. Narayana Menon *(Conservator of Forests):*

(*a*) Statement appended. *(Appendix II)*

	Approximate
(*b*) Teak Plantations	32,24,720
Regeneration areas	17,96,050
	50,20,770

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly